

News Release

Senator Pete V. Domenici

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DOMENICI SEEKS FUNDING FOR BATAAN VETERANS MEMORIAL IN SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO

Senator Wants Bataan Death March Reparations to be Tax Exempt

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senator Pete Domenici today indicated that he will seek a \$150,000 federal appropriation to begin developing a memorial in Las Cruces dedicated to World War II veterans of the infamous Bataan Death March, many of whom hailed from southern New Mexico.

Domenici, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, is requesting the funding as part of the FY2001 Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies (VA-HUD) Appropriations Bill. The committee should consider this bill later this summer.

The Domenici request, if it becomes law, would provide funding for a sculpture designed by a local artist to honor Bataan veterans. The proposal would include placing the memorial at the Veterans' Park, which has been developed through a property donation from the city of Las Cruces as well as material and labor contributed by the Las Cruces Home Builders Association.

"The Veterans' Park in Las Cruces is a beautiful spot to remember our veterans, and I credit the community for wanting to add to its appeal by adding a tribute to their family members and neighbors who among the American forces who fought at Bataan," Domenici said. "Securing this funding may not be easy, but I will try my best to get it done."

The Bataan Death March involved members of the 200 Coast Anti-Artillery Aircraft and 515th Coast Anti-Artillery Aircraft, New Mexico National Guard Units. They were among the more than 70,000 American and Filipino prisoners of war who were captured in April 1942 and force marched to a Japanese work camp. Suffering from starvation and physical abuse, more than 7,000 died and only about 56,000 reached the camp. Thousands later died from malnutrition and disease. Survivors were liberated in 1945.

Of the 1,800 men in the New Mexico Brigade, fewer than 900 returned home and a third of those died within the first year of returning.

Last October, Domenici cosponsored S.1806, which would provide \$20,000 in reparations for WWII veterans who were forced to provide slave labor for the Japanese war effort while being held as prisoners of war following the Bataan and Corregidor campaigns. While throwing his support behind the legislation, Domenici has said he will work to see if the bill can be improved by exempting the reparation from exorbitant federal taxes. The bill is pending before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee.